

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission
Trappe Town Office Building
Trappe, MD
September 5, 2013 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Walter Chase, Ted Bautz, Gordon Graves, Gerald O'Mara, Leonard Wendowski, Mike Henry, John General, Paul Makosky., Erik Neil. **Ex Officio Members Present:** John Craig, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas and Mike Henry. **Members Excused:** Ann Borders, Susie Hayward, Peter Dunbar and Geoff Oxnam.

Attendees: Timothy Jones, Mayor Willey, Art Reeside, Vandy Corson and Alden Firth

Guest Speakers: Laura Heikes, Sr. VP, Branch Administration, The Talbot Bank; and Cynthia Parks, Trappe Branch Manager, The Talbot Bank provided an overview of The Talbot Bank's history and role in the Mid-Shore community and the Town of Trappe. The Talbot Bank is a member of Shore Bancshares, and also includes Avon Dixon, Wye Financial & Trust, and Centreville National Bank. The Talbot Bank works with 50,000 customers in the Mid-Shore Region to address the economic needs of its customers with seven branch offices. The Trappe location employs three full-time staff and will celebrate five years this summer. Recent business activity in the Town of Trappe includes the opening of Hampden Design Studio in the Moore Building; two new pizza shops to open over the summer; and Mitchum's retail and gift shop in the back building. Habitat for Humanity Choptank, with offices in Trappe, is a big community partner with The Talbot Bank. On September 28th Talbot Bank is hosting "Shred Day" from 10:30 – 12:30 in support of people who do not own a shredder and need to protect themselves from identity theft. Shred Day supports the local Girl Scouts. The Talbot Bank supports many community non-profit and charitable organizations in the Mid-Shore Region. The Commission thanked The Talbot Bank for their presentation.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m. by Chairman Walter Chase, in the Town of Trappe Meeting Room, located at 4011 Powell Avenue, Trappe, MD 21673-0162. A quorum was present.

Agenda and Minutes: The Agenda for the September 5th Commission Meeting was approved without changes. The Minutes from the August 1, 2013 Commission meeting were not approved. Paul Makosky asked for an edit with regards to correspondence to the Town of Easton over the matter of preserving Industrial Zoned land. Correspondence was to reflect assurance that future development applications be viewed with the recognition that Industrial Land must be preserved as an opportunity to support the future tax base. A motion from Ted Bautz and a second from Erik Neil for the correction was recorded and approved. The August Meeting Minutes will be edited to reflect this comment and reviewed at the October Commission Meeting.

Correspondence to Commission: The Commission received correspondence from Mike Henry concerning an update on the status of federal funds to support Airport Control Towers. No additional response was required at this time. The Commission received an expression of interest from Haim Loran to serve in the vacancy created by the resignation of Mark Ensor who represented manufacturing.

Old Business:

Waterside Village Approval: The Commission discussed the recent Public Hearings by the Town of Easton for the four phases of Waterside Village Development. Of note, 58 acres are identified for conservation on land that is zoned Light Industrial. Comments were made that the Town of Easton has an excess of Industrial Zoned land at the Easton Technology Park, the Talbot Commerce Park and Teal Drive and that there have been no applications for Industrial use for some time. The four Phases of Waterside Park

Development have been before the Town for consideration for an extended period of time and the approval will provide for build out and an increase in tax revenues for the town. A commission member remarked that the “Talbot County Land Use Recommendation” made it obvious that Talbot County is losing Industrial Zoned land and, even if it were not in immediate demand, it would be prudent to pay attention to protecting and preserving the capacity. To maintain an excess of Industrial Zoned land should make it affordable and attractive for development. A discussion of concern was held for the role that non-elected officials have in determining development outcomes.

Vacancy Recommendations: The ED Commission’s recommendation to the Talbot County Council to fill a vacancy was further discussed with two resumes in review. Discussion ensued with favorable references for both candidates. Len Wendowski motioned to invite both candidates to the October 3rd meeting for introductions. The motion as seconded by Ted Bautz.

The Program of Work for the Strategic Plan Recommendations: The Director led a discussion concerning the next steps in acting on the Strategic Plan Recommendations. Three recommendations were identified as most pressing and affordable, given the already established FY 14 Budget, for immediate work include: “1). Business Friendly Initiatives; Goal: Create a culture within the County and Town governments that embrace small business owners, including expediting the granting of permits, creating greater transparency with respect to when businesses qualify for available tax credits, and considering applications for zoning modification more aggressively and favorably. 2) Aggressively pursue target industries for retention and attraction by creating resources for economic development; Goal: Support business retention, expansion and attraction through effective economic development resources. 3). More pragmatic approach for real property tax credit for commercial and industrial businesses; Goal: Accelerate investment, particularly in high wage manufacturing activities (revision of “Bill 737 – Tax Credits for Businesses”)”.

Several Commission members expressed interest in working in these areas. The Director offered to establish criteria and participation for three Task Force Committees, to be led by the Commission, approved by the County Council and the Towns with an outline for a work structure based on the Goals. The Commission members will be encouraged to participate in one of the three Task Forces as part of a commitment to accomplish the recommendation. The Director will work with the Commission to establish Chairs and populate the three Task groups. Ted Bautz offered to work on the review of the Talbot County Real Estate Tax abatement legislation; Al Silverstein expressed interest in reviewing the County and Town Permitting and Development Process; and Erick Neil, John General and Al Silverstein expressed interest in a Branding exercise.

Control Tower Funding: The House Appropriation for Funding the FAA to continue to support the operation of Control Towers at General Aviation Airports is in jeopardy with the pending Continuing Resolution. An award for funds to provide a one to three month extension is now being sought by Senator Cardin. Congressman Andy Harris is supportive of the extension and of funding for the Contract Towers. Air traffic has picked up at the Easton Airport with 5,000 operations per month, which are also impacting increases in fuel sales. Mike Henry extended his appreciation for the letters and support.

Chairman’s Report: Walter Chase attended the Governor’s Announcement for funding for the Dover Bridge, a \$167 million investment that will replace aging infrastructure and provide for a safe connection over the Choptank River between Federalsburg / Preston and Easton. The Chairman attended several community functions including the Channel Markers Fundraising event.

Director’s Report: The tour of Poplar Island is scheduled for Friday, September 13th with a group of 15 invited guests as a promotion for the awareness of environmental restoration and reclamation activity in Talbot County and a chance to learn about this project. Poplar Island has been restored from a five-acre

parcel to 500 acres currently, and will be 750 acres when complete. The Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) has identified Maryland Economic Week as September 30th through October 4th. October 4th is Maryland Manufacturing Day. The Director has planned a visit with the ED Commission and elected officials to a manufacturing facility. The MEDA Fall Conference, "Sense of Place" is scheduled for October 1st in Frederick, MD. Go to www.medamd.com to register. Retention visits were conducted for Caloris Engineering, MD Broadband, Trident, Bio Maryland, The White Oak Group and Allen Harim. The Director is working with the Town of St. Michaels to locate a physician who is interested in a St. Michaels practice. PNC Bank announced they will be closing the downtown location in St. Michaels. The Director attended the MACO Conference in Ocean City and a presentation on Off-Shore Wind in Worcester County. The ED Office reviewed over 135 applicants for the County Administrative Assistant position to support the office; interviews have been scheduled. Bradley Gillis has made room available at Achievement Park to store food for the Neighborhood Service Center. A letter of acknowledgement to Mr. Gillis from the Commission was recommended and approved.

Member Activity Reports: **Gordon Graves:** standing in for Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford announced this year's Oxford Museum fall fundraiser, Piga-Figalicious, was a success. The Museum will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2014 and they hope to retire the mortgage on their current facility. The town of Oxford has filed an application for USDA grant funds to upgrade their sewer. **Gerald O'Mara, Agriculture:** discussed the attempt to make Talbot County Zoning business friendly as an excellent recommendation and goal. He also reported that the crops this year were good in Talbot County and the farmers anticipate high yields. Corn is now trading at half the price of last year while soy beans are trading higher than last year. He advised all to read the Peggy Noonan's column in the August 30, 2103 Wall Street Journal, "*Work and the American Character*" and provided a copy. **Leonard Wendowski, Town of Easton:** already discussed the Waterside Village project and there was no further comment. **Mike Henry, Easton Airport:** announced Airport Day will be held on September 28th at the Easton Airport with several visiting "War Birds", a 5K run on the runway and a Jet Pull. Proceeds will be donated to Habitat Choptank to support Repair Corps, a housing repair program, which will assist U.S. veterans, and their families whose homes are in critical need of repair. **Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported a contractor's forum will be held on September 11th at the College for those interested in working on the \$32 million Allied Health building. A small business symposium will be held on September 18th and a Golf Tournament to provide athletic scholarships will be held on October 12th. **Terenda Thomas, Workforce:** reported the Maryland Department of Labor, License and Regulation (DLLR) Easton office is working with the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce and the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board to host a Job Fair on September 17th at the Talbot County Community Center. Art Reeside and Dave Prossner will be serving Talbot County as business representatives. The DLLR Office has established an agreement with the Maryland Library System to offer career services. They are working on the Maryland EARN program to support workforce training projects. Unemployment is up to 6.8% in Talbot County. **Erik Neil, Arts:** commented the Academy Art Museum had a productive summer including the James Turrell exhibit, which went on to tour nationally. The Wye House Archeology Exhibition, made possible by the support of Richard and Beverly Tilghman, the University of Maryland, College Park and the Frederick Douglass Honor Society, is open and covers a rich history of Talbot County. The July Plein Air Festival sold over \$333, 000 of artwork. The Academy Art Museum now offers tax credits with the proceeds supporting cultural activities. **Al Silverstein, Chamber of Commerce:** reported the Chamber recruited 30 employers to interview candidates for job openings at the Job Fair. The Oak Room will be used as a resource center and several seminars were scheduled that week. The Chamber hosted a ribbon cutting for U Sushi, a new Sushi restaurant in the Marlboro Plaza. The Chamber Annual Awards Dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24th at 6 pm at Martingham Harbortowne, in St. Michaels. The Chamber Economic Symposium, sponsored by M&T Bank, will be held on October 23rd at the Tidewater Inn. Commission members are invited to attend. **John General, Small Business:** reported the

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST Bus) advertising is now available to offset the cost of the system. Scott Warner reported the Mid-Shore Regional Council will review the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan in October and identify new infrastructure projects for EDA Funding consideration in the Mid-Shore Region. **Paul Makosky, Private Citizen:** had no report. **Ted Bautz, Vice Chairman/Business Community:** reported there has been two-year hiatus in buying real estate and that recent trends indicate the property value is no longer declining and interest rates will be increasing, placing greater restrictions on buyers. **Susie Hayward, Member at Large:** submitted, in her absence, estimated housing figures for August 2013:

Real Estate Report for May 2013:

	Units Listed as of 9/4/13	Sold in August
Talbot County	696	41
Easton	339	26
St. Michaels	94	5
Oxford	55	1
Trappe	45	2
Tilghman	42	3

Mayor Willey, Town of Easton: updated the Commission on the progress being made by the Easton Economic Development Commission. They have drafted by-laws and will be submitting them to the Towns Council for adoption. Mark Heckler resigned as Interim ED Director from the Town of Easton. Any interest in Economic Development projects should be referred to Lynn Thomas.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Meetings are held at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. **The next Economic Development Commission Meeting will be held on October 3rd at the Key Lime Café, located at 207 North Talbot Street, St Michaels, MD at 8:00 a.m.**